

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Bacchiochi Opposes Flawed Campaign Finance Bill



Legislation approved by the state House of Representatives at about 3 a.m. last Thursday does not provide real campaign finance reform and fails to rectify several flaws in the current statute that have been widely criticized over the years, state Representative Penny Bacchiochi, R-52nd District, said today.

“Although proponents of the legislation described the bill approved by the General Assembly last week as ‘campaign finance reform,’ it does not provide the kind of change the people of Somers, Stafford and Union really want. The bill does not eliminate all special interest money from campaigns for state offices and it creates a public financing system that takes money from the state’s General Fund and uses it to pay for political campaigns,” said Representative Bacchiochi, who opposed the measure.

“Somers, Stafford and Union residents are well-aware of how public financing for political campaigns will affect their quality of life. They understand that when scarce state revenues are used to fund political campaigns, it means fewer dollars are left to pay for critical state programs such as open space preservation and aid to local school districts,” Representative Bacchiochi said. “They took a clear stand on the issue in their responses to one of the questions in the survey I sent out at the beginning of the 2005 legislative session: 82 percent said they opposed using tax dollars to fund political campaigns.”

The legislation will provide each candidate for the state House of Representatives with \$25,000 in state funding for their general election campaigns if they qualify for the grants by raising \$5,000 from individual contributions of \$100 or less. Candidates for the state Senate would receive \$85,000 to cover their general election campaign expenses after raising \$15,000 in seed money from individual contributions of \$100 or less.

“The estimated cost to taxpayers would be about \$17 million per year, creating a hole in the General Fund that would have to be filled either by tax increases or cuts in spending for existing programs,” Representative Bacchiochi said.

“I also was opposed to the ‘shell game’ this bill creates. Special interest money will still trickle in, but it will come through a maze of ‘leadership’ Political Action Committees (PACs). The measure allows the minority and majority leaders of the House and Senate

to form PACs that can accept money from special interests and use it to make unlimited expenditures on behalf of legislative campaigns. It is a major departure from one of the most sought-after goals of campaign finance reform – taking special interest money out of state politics,” Representative Bacchiochi said.

“In addition, the legislation sets forth no rules or guidelines on how candidates can spend the state dollars provided to them, making it almost impossible to hold them accountable for legal but questionable spending,” Representative Bacchiochi said.